

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, April 25. 1691.

Quest. 1. What is the true meaning of the new Word Abdication?

Answ. We have been much importun'd about this Question, and the Querist having signified in his last, that it has been his misfortune to meet some Persons who by their Arguments about it, seem uneasie, and cannot well reconcile the Word and the Action that gave Life to its general Acceptation. We, therefore for the Gentleman's Satisfaction, as also others, who perhaps may be at the same loss, return this Answer :

That 'tis a word as old as the Civil Law given by the Romans to Europe, by which all National Differences were decided, as *meum* and *tuum* are now by the Common Law. The word *Dication* according to the Idiom or Propriety of the Roman Language, signifies a Promise or Trust, or a Rule by which the Person intrusted, was to regulate his Accounts ; and he that went contrary to the diction of his Promise, Oath, Trust or Commission, was said to abdicate or go from the Dication he had undertaken. As for Example in the Roman Militia, If a Souldier petitioned against his Commissioned Officer he always put in the word *abdicavit meam tetulam*, that is, he hath abdicated my Safety, hath gone contrary to the Tenor of his Trust, and contradicted my safety by putting me upon such unreasonable and hazardous Attempts. The Roman Histories afford several adjudged Cases ; to mention one, *Lentulus* was Commissioned to command part of the Army, his Letters were intercepted, and it was proved to the Senate that *Lentulus* held private Correspondence with the Enemy, contrary to the Dication or Contents of his Commission and Trust ; therefore the Senate voted that *Lentulus* had abdicated his Trust, and contradicted the Safety of the Army : *Lentulus* his Friends got the Vote put again, whether he had abdicated voluntarily or unwillingly ; (as the Papists and Jacobites now ask in the Case of the late King *James* :) The Senate resolv'd the second time that *Lentulus* had abdicated his Trust, and knew whither to come to make out whether he had willingly or unwillingly held Correspondence with the Enemy, but he came not, and they took the forfeiture of his Abdication. Whether the late King *James* had voluntarily abdicated his Trust, according to this genuine Interpretation of the word *Abdication*, is foreign to the Question, and has been sufficiently discuss'd by others.

Quest. 2. Whither went the ten Tribes ?

Answ. This Question is not so difficult, if we compare their Laws and Customs with

those of other Nations, and where we find the greatest agreement in practice we may with the greatest probability fix the Affirmative of the Question. But before we discuss that, we shall give you the received Opinion which the two Tribes entertain about their lost Brethren. — There is (say they) a great Lake in Asia, which is always toss'd with Tempests and Storms, so that it is unnavigable, except on the Sabbath day, upon which day the ten Tribes being still Jews, are unwilling to travail or contradict so great a part of the old Law, as a Prophanation of their Sabbath, and therefore must tarry there ; but this seems very unlikely, for the Question recurs, How they could get over at first, unless upon the Sabbath, when according to their saying the Lake is then only free from Tempests. But to satisfie the Querist, we have the Testimony of Josephus, that they were in great Numbers in the Land of Media under the Parthian Princes ; also Sulpitius Severus, that they were dispersed amongst the Parthians, Medes, Indians and Ethiopians, all which exactly agrees to our Notion in the first part of our Answer, that in these Places above the rest of the World are retained washings, sprinklings and other Jewish Ceremonies ; but by a long tract and series of time the ten Tribes are now really Heatheniz'd.

Quest. 3. Why can an Owl see better by Night than by Day ?

Answ. Light is the medium of visibility, and without Light nothing can be seen, therefore the Supposition is erroneous, and the Question ought to have been thus stated ; Why an Owl can see better by a faint and imperfect Light, than at such time as when the Sun shines in its full vigour, without the Interposition of Clouds or other intervening Bodies — and then the Question will admit of a very fair Solution, viz. That some Creatures have the Pupil of their Eye very large, as are not subject to so little a Contraction as is requisite for a great Light ; as Cats, Rats, Mice, Owls, and some few more. When as the generality of Creatures are naturally furnished with Pupils or Eye-sights that will grow greater or lesser according to the degree of Light : As for Instance, when a Man has been in the dark for some considerable time, and comes suddenly into a light place, or when a Candle is brought into a dark Room, and a Man awakes out of his sleep, the sudden light dazles the Eye by reason the Pupil of the Eye was extended before to co-operate with the Act of visibility ; nor can the Eye be easie till it has again receiv'd a proper degree of Contraction, for the quality

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of Light, and a due representation of Objects; this may also be farther confirmed by this Instance, Cover one of your Eyes, and the Pupil of the other will dilate to supply the Office of that which is cover'd; uncover that Eye again, and the other Pupil will contract, for the reason above; from hence it appears that the Creatures above named being furnished with a great Eye, lights which admit not of a Contraction, proper for great Lights, can see best in lesser Lights, yet they cannot see at all where there is no Light.

Quest. 4. Why are there greater Eruptions in Mount Etna in stormy Weather than at other times?

Answ. From a strife betwixt contrary Elements, Water and Fire put together will never cease fighting till one of 'em has got the upper hand. It may be a useful Digression, not altogether foreign, to give you an Instance of the Contrariety of other Elements.—Take an Arrow and hold it over the Flame of a Candle, where the body of the Flame meets with the Arrow, it has not that Effect upon the Arrow as the extream parts of the Flame; the reason is, the Extremity of the Flame meeting with the Air, both Elements strive to retain their own Nature, and therefore the extream Flame acts with greater violence, and consequently has a greater Effect on those parts of the Arrow: hence it is, and from such other Experiments, that some have (and not improbably) believed that the Element of Fire is moderate, and that a man might live in it, if it were not too much rarified for Respiration.

Quest. 5. What is the cause of Earthquakes?

Answ. 'Tis very improbable that the common Hypothesis should be a truth, that Wind having casually got into the Caverns of the Earth should by its strugling to get out again, produce Earthquakes, since Wind of its self has no power to struggle unless engag'd and push'd forward by some other Matter, or further Wind. We affirm it reasonable to believe that this Globe of the Earth may be as subject to ruine and decay as the lesser Particles of the Creation, and that Earthquakes are but the Convulsion of Natures frame, caused by an intestine decay and Motion, for no one ever deny'd there were subterranean Passages, both Channels of Water, and Veins of liquid Fire, though more in some places than others, as Mount Etna, Vesuvius, &c. Now this being granted, a Motion is proved, and decay is the natural Cause of Motion—To this we may add, that these Subterranean Veins of Fire meeting with Channels of Water, not only cause a strife and Motion in the Bowels of the Earth, but also generate Air by fumigation and rarification of the Water, which Air increasing grows too big for its Caverns, and so struggles and helps on with those Convulsions and Ruines of Nature as we said before: this is manifest in that in many Earthquakes, if not in all where the Earth yawns, there have been seen great flakes of Fire and Smoke to ascend.

Quest. 6. Since there are a hundred Sheep killed for one Fox, and a Fox breeds six or more at a time, a Sheep seldom more than one, why there are so many more Sheep than Foxes?

Answ. Because there being at the first breeding of Sheep it may be a thousand Sheep for one Fox; for Example here in England these Sheep live several years, and are carefully preserved, breeding yearly at least one, these are cherished, their kind at least, whereas the Foxes are every where hunted and destroyed. The Wolf has undoubtedly as many young at a litter as the Fox, they being both of the Dog-kind, and as much pestred England in former ages yet we see by the strict Penal Laws so long put in Execution against 'em, there are now twenty Jesuits to one Wolf throughout all the three Kingdoms.

Quest. 7. There being a Machine so contrived and made of Brads and Steel, and put into Motion, and the same strength that causes the Motion be continually repeated till the Machine be decayed by length of time, Whether this is not as much as the World can expell towards a perpetual Motion, and whether this juncture of time be proper to discover such an Invention; the Author being willing to make the best Advantage of it, it being supposed to be of great Use?

Answ. 'Tis as much as can be expected to frame such a Motion as will not stand still till its Causes are worn out, and demand new Supplies for its Progression. Whatever Machine it is, if it be of so great use as is pretended, it will necessarily recommend it self, and it had been the Authors Policy to have mentioned his Name and Design to have made it publick, but he knows his own time for that.

Quest. 8. Whether it be convenient to entertain Conversation with Angels or no? and the reasons for or against it?

Answer. Yes, by all means, if they be good ones; and if you can find out a way to settle such a Correspondence, because their long Experience of Causes and Effects, capacitates them for Information above all Mortals in the Secrets of Nature, Philosohy, &c.

Quest. 9. Whether the Child at the day of Judgment shall not be grieved at the Damnation of its Parent.

Answ. Natural Relation is cancelled in the Grave, and there is no Consanguinity in Heaven. I shall equally love Saint Peter and my Brother, and equally hate Julian the Apostate and my Father, under a supposition of an equality in their final Sentence.

Quest. 10. What are we to think of those that dye in Infancy?

Answ. With the greatest Satisfaction imaginable, that they are all saved; besides the many Testimonies of Sacred Writ for this, we prove it thus—No greater a Punishment will be inflicted upon Adam's Heirs than upon himself, for eating the forbidden Fruit. But his Punishment was only Mortality, or a temporal Death, therefore his Heirs, &c. the Major proposition is the general sentiment of all Mankind, an Attainment of Blood being heavier on the Child than the Parent; or an Accessary more guilty than the Principal.—As for the Minor the best Expositors have concluded the Sentence of Thou shalt dye the Death to be only a Menace of Mortality, viz. Thou shalt be a mortal Man, or subject to Death, and is agreeable to this Text, The Soul that sinneth it shall dye.

Quest. 11. Who was the Father of Melchizedeck?

Answ. When a Question can have no better Resolutions than Negatives, we must content our selves with the best that can be offered. Mr. Galliard (Lugduni Batav. apud Falicem Lopez, 1686. in octavo,) confutes all Opinions both Ancient and Modern, excepting that which asserts that Melchizedeck is the very Son of God; he proves that Salem and Melchizedeck are not prope Names, and that there was never any City called by the Name of Salem, and adds that if Melchizedeck were a Priest, he must offer for his own Sins, and the Sins of the People; but then he could not be of a more excellent Name than the Sons of Levi, which is expressly contradictory to the Scripture. But after all he knows not how to disentangle himself from the Inference of difference, as is suggested by that passage, Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedeck: Nothing can be laid but what is refutable. The most learned Discussers of this Point are Heideggerus, du Moulin and Cunexus, to which we refer our Inquirer. At the end of the Volume expect a full Answer.

Being requested by a worthy Person to return a speedy Answer to this Question, viz. Whether a tender Friendship betwixt two Persons of a different Sex can be innocent? We shall endeavour to resolve him next Tuesday or Saturday at farthest.